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April 21, 2009

Council Chair Todd Apo and
Members of Honolulu City Council
530 South King Street
Honolulu, HI 96813
Fax: 527-6910

Subject: Bill 16

Support for Haleiwa Business Improvement District/Walkways

Dear Council Chair Apo and Members of the City Council:

I am writing this letter in support of Bill 16 requesting \$100,000 for the Haleiwa Business Improvement District project to improve access and safety to the millions of visitors who come to the North Shore as well as for the residents of the North Shore and Oahu. This project is recommended in the North Shore Sustainable Communities Plan and is supported by many groups including the North Shore Neighborhood Board, Kamehameha Schools, Waialua Community Association, the North Shore Outdoor Circle and others. It is identified as the highest priority in the "Made in Haleiwa Town" town plan dating back to July 26, 1991, in which 340 residents participated. In a recent survey of the town's merchants, 92% of all the merchants were in favor of continuous walkways in the town citing safety as the main reason for needing walkways.

The growth of traffic from both local and tourist activities in the Haleiwa area has rapidly outgrown the existing facilities' ability to provide safe methods for getting around on foot. The North Shore, and especially Haleiwa, is a visitor destination that brings in almost 2.5 million visitors per year,* and yet there are no walkways for visitors to safely walk on through this quaint, historic town while exploring, shopping, and eating at the restaurants. Instead, there are potholes, puddles and trip hazards that visitors frequently get hurt from.

The North Shore community needs immediate help with this issue before something tragic happens. Under the current circumstances, pedestrians are forced to walk on the narrow shoulders of the roadways or in the middle of the road creating a situation where drivers must dodge the pedestrians. People in wheelchairs and babies in strollers must go onto the road since there are uneven, dirt shoulders that are difficult to traverse. In many places, shoulders are completely nonexistent, leaving pedestrians at an extreme risk of injury from an unplanned clash with an automobile.

Please vote to support this long-awaited and highest-priority project so that our second most popular tourist destination on Oahu becomes visitor friendly and safe.

I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Barbara L. Ritchie

* DEBDT tack-on surveys in 2003 and 2005 show that 51% of all overnight Oahu visitors visited the North Shore. Highest levels of dissatisfaction (10%) were with facilities.

MISC. COM. 878

PH